



Veterans' Health

THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE
FOR OHIO VETERANS

W I N T E R • 2 0 0 1

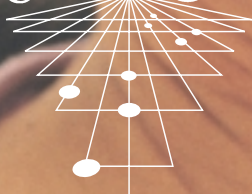
Giving Back With
Gratitude

Meet Ohio Veterans
Hall Of Famers

Self-Help Strategies
For Stronger Bones

Domestic Abuse:
A Hidden Health Issue

VA Healthcare
System of Ohio



With Respect To Our Women Veterans

You may notice that this issue of *Veterans' Health* focuses largely on women. It's our humble way of recognizing the great contribution women veterans have made and addressing some important female health concerns:

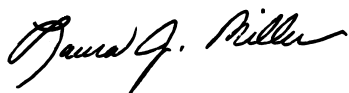
Osteoporosis, or brittle bone disease, is a condition that affects 8 million American women, leading to fractures, potentially robbing them of their independence and even threatening their lives. Yet much can be done in terms of prevention, early detection and effective treatment. So make time to read the informative article on page 4: It may be a first step toward safeguarding your bone health.

An often hidden but devastating situation affecting many women is **domestic abuse**. If you suspect you or someone you care about may be trapped in an abusive relationship, find out why you should reach out for help.

If you are a female **heart attack** survivor, don't miss our article on rebounding from heart disease. Learn about special measures women can take to protect their cardiovascular health.

Last but not least, we are extremely proud to introduce our readers to Barbara Rounds-Kugler and Bonnie Rost, who were inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame on November 9. Meet them on the opposite page.

Thanks for spending some time with this issue of *Veterans' Health*. Our goal is to keep you informed and aware about matters that affect your continued health and well-being. We hope we're on the right track.



—Laura Miller
Network Director

Veterans' Health is published quarterly as a patient education service by VA Healthcare System of Ohio, one of the 22 integrated networks of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The publication is intended to provide information to help you stay well, manage your healthcare and learn about the many health services available through the VA. This publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your doctor. All articles may be reproduced for educational purposes.

The Mission of the VA Healthcare System of Ohio is:

- To provide veterans a continuum of care that is accessible, value-added and cost-effective, and of the highest quality, within an environment of outstanding education and research.
- To promote a culture that supports and develops a caring, compassionate, competent and quality-oriented workforce.

COVER PHOTO: ROB LEWINE/THE STOCK MARKET

Women Veteran Coordinators Offer Comprehensive Care With A Special Touch

Since October 1991, women veterans have been able to turn to a unique and valuable resource for help: a VISN 10 Women Veterans Coordinator (WVC). Both an administrator and a clinician, a WVC assesses the special needs of women veterans, provides medical care and assists in the planning, organizing and coordinating of each VA medical facility's Women's Clinic services and programs.

For more information about the Women's Health program in your facility, contact your Women Veteran's Coordinator, listed below.

Brecksville Nancy Myers-Bradley 440-526-3030	Columbus Clary Garablis 614-257-5562 Cincinnati Sharon D. Parker 513-475-6984	Dayton Martha Trass 937-268-6511, ext. 1907 Wade Park Mary Knowles 216-231-3425
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Giving Back With Gratitude

Meet Ohio Veterans Hall Of Famers

In 1995, Barbara Rounds-Kugler, R.N., a former colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves, attended an Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame induction ceremony honoring Sharon Lane, the only nurse killed as a direct result of enemy fire in Vietnam. It was especially touching for Barbara because she had served as Lane's supervisor in Vietnam.

Now, five years later, Barbara has herself been inducted into this group. When she heard she was being so honored, Barbara thought, *What did I do to deserve this?*

Yet there are plenty of good reasons why Barbara, a research nurse at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center currently studying Gulf War syndrome, is now a member of the Hall of Fame. A member of the American Legion, the VFW and the Vietnam Veterans of America, Barbara is serving as Americanism Chairman of her American Legion Post, focusing on youth programs, in particular the National High School Oratorical Contest and the Americanism in Government award. "These programs let kids know it's okay to be patriotic and to enjoy doing things that may be different from what their peers are doing."

Through her affiliation with the VFW, Barbara is the State Homeless Veterans Chairman. She uses this position to raise awareness of the plight of homeless veterans in Ohio.

This devotion to homeless veterans extends to her work as President of Joseph House for Homeless Veterans in Cincinnati, a facility that provides long-term residential rehabilitation.

Blessed with an innovative mind, Barbara identifies needs and works to fill them. There is perhaps no better example than her 20-year stint at



Barbara Rounds-Kugler

the corrections division of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department. "When I started the job," says Barbara, "there was no medical program, no medical record-keeping, no medical screening. So I built a program using the skills I had learned. By the time I left, the program had become a model for other large corrections facilities."

And these are just small examples of Barbara's efforts. How to explain her drive? She attributes much of it to the lesson her father taught her. "My dad, Charles Hafner, was a World War II marine," says Barbara. "Still alive today, he continues to exemplify the responsibility of citizenship in a democracy. 'You've got to give back to show your gratitude for what you've gotten,' he says." There's not a person who could say Barbara is doing anything but. **VH**

Bonnie Rost Honored

A Navy nurse from 1956 to 1958 and a member of the reserves since then, Bonnie Rost was inducted into the Ohio Hall of Fame along with Barbara Rounds-Kugler in November. A model of selflessness over the years, Bonnie has lobbied to obtain traffic lights so school-children could cross safely, has participated in Harvard Medical School's landmark Nurses' Health Study since 1976 and has worked to support the American Heritage Association, which provides food for the Sioux Indians. Bonnie is also a Women in Military Services Association (WIMSA) charter member and field representative and served for three years on the governor's advisory committee for women veterans. Our heartfelt congratulations and thanks to her.



Bonnie Rost

Self-Help Strategies For Stronger

Consider these facts:

- Two in five women age 50 or older will suffer a fracture as a direct result of the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis.
- Most fractures occur in women age 65 or older.
- Osteoporosis accounts for more than one million fractures a year in the U.S. alone.
- Osteoporosis is *not* an inevitable part of aging.

Surprised? While it's true that bone loss speeds up after menopause because of dropping estrogen levels, women can safeguard their skeletal system by taking these measures:

Know your risk. Factors that make a woman more vulnerable to osteoporosis include being Caucasian, having a thin frame, leading a sedentary lifestyle, having a family history of the disease, suffering a previous fracture not caused by trauma, cigarette smoking and drinking alcohol. Extensive use of corticosteroids, certain diuretics (water

pills) and blood thinners and too much thyroid hormone in the bloodstream can also sap a woman's bone strength.

Get screened. Discuss your risk factors with your VA healthcare provider. Ask him or her if you should get a bone-density test. The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends the following women get the painless screening:

- postmenopausal women younger than age 65 who have one or more risk factors
- all women older than 65, regardless of risk factors
- women who have been taking hormone



Bones

replacement therapy for a long time

Once you and your VA healthcare provider have a good idea of the state of your bones, you can take appropriate action, which may include using medications such as HRT, alendronate, raloxifene or calcitonin to either prevent or treat osteoporosis.

Exercise. Performed at least 30 minutes three times a week, weight-bearing exercises such as brisk walking, skipping rope, dancing and stair climbing can improve bone density. Low-impact activities such as yoga and tai chi are especially helpful because they promote better balance, flexibility and coordination, which in turn reduces the risk of falls. For its part, resistance training, or weight lifting, strengthens muscles in the upper spine and arms, improves posture and prevents fractures.

Ask your VA healthcare provider if these activities are suitable for you.

Get your vitamins. Calcium supplements have been shown to reduce nonvertebral fractures significantly in elderly women and men. Recommended amounts include 1,200 mg daily for postmenopausal women whether or not they are taking HRT. Women who don't include enough calcium in their diets because of lactose intolerance may also require



Calcium supplements can help prevent fractures.

supplements. Getting adequate calcium, through diet or supplements, can help slow bone loss at any age. (Dietary sources of calcium include low-fat dairy products, collard greens and canned sardines and salmon with bones.)

Vitamin D helps the body use and absorb calcium. A deficiency of this vitamin can contribute to osteoporosis. Good sources include vitamin D-fortified skim milk, liver, eggs and fish. About 15 minutes of sunlight exposure a day also helps the body maintain adequate levels. A daily multivitamin supplying 400 IU to 800 IU can also ensure you're getting enough.

Ask your VA healthcare provider how much calcium and vitamin D is best for you and whether a supplement can help. **Eliminate bad habits.** Smoking and drinking alcohol interfere with your body's ability to absorb calcium and accelerate bone loss.

Don't wait for a fall or a fracture to find out your bones are in bad shape. Take advantage of medical advances that allow us to assess our bone health—and do something about it. **VH**

Focus On Fall Prevention

Simply put, staying on your feet is one way to avoid fractures caused by osteoporosis. Fall-proofing strategies in the home include removing throw rugs, loose cords and low furniture from walkways. Install handrails or grab bars where needed and keep rooms well lit.

Choose thinner, hard-soled shoes that offer more stability than cushiony athletic footwear. Use a cane or walker if you need it. Never rise quickly from a reclining position. Wait a few minutes before rising to help your blood pressure readjust and prevent dizziness.

Some medications may cause dizziness, so ask your doctor to review them. And don't forget to have your vision and hearing checked regularly as these may affect your balance.



Keeping domestic abuse hush hush merely fuels this pervasive problem. Consider that battering is the single greatest cause of injury to women—more frequent, in fact, than car accidents, muggings and rapes combined.

But the physical injuries of any given incident of abuse aren't the only medical problems that vic-

behavior, especially when he has treated you badly?

4. Do you have to justify everything you do, every place you go or every person you see to avoid your partner's anger?

5. Does your partner put you down but then tell you he loves you?

6. Has your partner ever hit, kicked, shoved or thrown things at you?

7. Do you not see friends or family because of your partner's jealousy?

8. Has your partner ever forced you to have sex?

9. Are you afraid to break up with your partner because he has threatened to hurt you, your children or himself?

Recognizing a batterer

These characteristics indicate that a man may have the potential to become a batterer:

- The man reports having been physically or psychologically abused as a child.
- He plays with guns and uses them to protect himself against other people.
- His mother was battered by his father.
- He commits acts of violence against objects.
- He drinks alcohol to excess.
- He becomes enraged when his partner doesn't listen to his advice.
- He appears to have a dual personality.
- There's a sense of "overdoing" it in his cruelty—or in his kindness.
- He has rigid ideas of what other people should or shouldn't do that are determined by male or female sex-role stereotypes.

If you are suffering domestic abuse, your VA primary care physician or counselor can help by listening, treating injuries and referring you to appropriate support services—all with a guarantee of confidentiality. Although admitting domestic abuse to your VA healthcare provider can be scary, remember that it's the first step on the road to recovery. **VH**

Domestic Abuse:

A Hidden Health Issue

tims experience. The stress of repeatedly suffering through the cycle of abuse can cause additional medical problems, such as headaches, back pain, anxiety disorders and sleeplessness. The combination of physical and psychological symptoms that occurs in women who suffer chronic abuse is known as the battered woman syndrome.

Signs of abuse

Sometimes women in abusive relationships are unsure if they are being victimized. One reason may be that abuse can take many different forms, including verbal. Experts say that a yes answer to any of the following questions may suggest an abusive relationship:

1. Are you frightened by your partner's temper?
2. Are you afraid to disagree with him?
3. Do you often apologize for your partner's

Women: Take Your Health To Heart

Rebounding From

Cardiovascular Disease

If you are a heart attack survivor, the odds are already stacked in your favor. After all, most victims aren't so lucky. Still, that doesn't mean you're off scot-free when it comes to your heart health. During the first six years after a heart attack, women have a 33 percent risk of experiencing a second attack.

If anything positive can be said about having a heart attack, it's that it provides an incentive to make healthy changes and take some heart-protecting steps. Here's an action plan every woman who has had a heart attack should take to heart.

Stub out smoking. Smoking is the leading cause of heart disease. If you haven't quit already, there's no better time to do it than now.

Control cholesterol. Before your next visit, tell your VA healthcare provider you'd like an evaluation of your fasting lipid profile, a measurement of the cholesterol and fat levels in your bloodstream. Undesirable levels should be treated aggressively if you have had a heart attack.

Find out if you need a daily dose. One of the most effective heart medications is probably sitting in your medicine cabinet: aspirin. Research shows that a daily dose slashes a person's chance of having a second heart attack by more than 30 percent. What's more, according to studies of Medicare recipients, more than 3,000 lives could be saved annually if Medicare recipients alone were to take a daily aspirin after a heart attack. Yet studies show that many female heart attack survivors are in the dark about aspirin's benefits. But before you start taking aspirin daily, talk to your doctor. Not everyone can take aspirin safely. For most of those who can, however, a daily

dose may be a powerful weapon against a heart attack.

Monitor weight. Strive to reach a healthy weight for your height and frame. If you are overweight, your doctor can prescribe an appropriate nutrition and fitness plan.

Pursue a program. Researchers at the University of Minnesota say that postmenopausal women who exercise regularly have a lower risk of dying prematurely from conditions such as cardiovascular disease and respiratory illness. With that in mind, ask your VA healthcare provider if a cardiac rehabilitation exercise program is right for you.

Watch the pressure. Have your blood pressure monitored regularly. After menopause, more women than men have high blood pressure. If you have hypertension, take any prescribed medication faithfully and follow your doctor's other lifestyle recommendations.

Cut the fat. The American Heart Association urges heart patients to restrict their total fat intake to 30 percent or fewer of all calories. Ask your physician if you need to cut back even further.

Get a handle on stress. Adopting stress-management techniques, such as meditation, yoga or tai chi can help lower blood pressure and promote a healthy sense of well-being. **VH**



Reaching Us Is Easy

Keep this information handy—when you need us, we'll be there.

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Athens VA Campus

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Bellevue VA Campus

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Brecksville VA Campus

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Canton, OH 44702
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Chillicothe VA Campus

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740-773-1141

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Cincinnati, OH 45220
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Columbus VA Campus

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614-257-5200

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Dayton, OH 45428
937-268-6511

East Liverpool VA Campus

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East Liverpool, OH 43920
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Ft. Thomas VA Campus

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606-572-6202

Grove City VA Campus

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Grove City, OH 43123
614-257-5800

Hillsboro VA Campus

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Hillsboro, OH 45133
937-393-8176

Lancaster VA Campus

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Colonnade Medical Building
Lancaster, OH 43130
740-653-6145

Lima Campus

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Lorain VA Campus

205 West 20th Street
Lorain, OH 44052
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Mansfield VA Campus

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419-529-4602

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740-568-0412

McCafferty VA Campus

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216-939-0699

Middletown VA Campus

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513-423-8387

New Philadelphia VA Campus

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Otis Moss/University Hospital VA Campus

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Cleveland, OH 44106
216-721-7221

Painesville VA Campus

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Portsmouth VA Campus

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740-353-3236

Ravenna VA Campus

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330-296-3641

Richmond/Hagerstown VA Campus

Nettle Creek Health Center
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Hagerstown, IN 47346
765-489-3950

Sandusky VA Campus

3416 Columbus Avenue
Sandusky, OH 44870
419-625-7350

Springfield VA Campus

512 South Burnett Road
Springfield, OH 45505
937-328-3385

Wade Park VA Campus

10701 East Boulevard
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-791-3800

Warren VA Campus

Riverside Square
1400 Tod Avenue (NW)
Warren, OH 44485
330-392-0323

Youngstown VA Campus

2031 Belmont Avenue
Youngstown, OH 44505
330-740-9200

Zanesville VA Campus

840 Bethesda Drive
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Zanesville, OH 43701
740-453-7725

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